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MR. WENTZ GOES TO WASHINGTON

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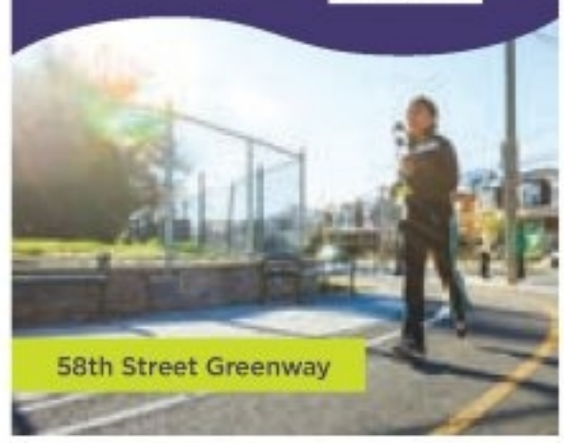

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BEN AFFLECK *TO THE RESCUE*

The star talks getting dirty with 'The Accountant' and the pains of parenthood. 16

CHUCK ZLOTNICK

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3 things you need to know

US MILITARY STRIKES YEMEN AFTER MISSILE ATTACKS ON NAVY SHIP

The U.S. military launched cruise-missile strikes Thursday to knock out three coastal radar sites in areas of Yemen controlled by Iran-aligned Houthi forces, retaliating after failed missile attacks this week on a U.S. Navy destroyer, U.S. officials said. The strikes, authorized by President Barack Obama, represent Washington's first direct military action against suspected Houthi-controlled targets in Yemen's conflict. Still, the Pentagon appeared to stress the limited nature of the strikes, aimed at radar that enabled the launch of at least three missiles against the U.S. Navy ship USS Mason on Sunday and Wednesday. REUTERS

CDC: SURVEY POINTS TO HIGHER US BIRTH RATE IN FUTURE

2 More U.S. women expect to have children some time in the future than they did in 2002, according to a federal study released Thursday, which could point to a higher birth rate. A survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that half of women ages 15–44 expected to have children, up from 46 percent in a 2002 survey. "It's not a huge increase but it is a statistically significant increase," one of the study's authors, Jill Daugherty, said. The increase could indicate a higher birth rate at some point in the future, Daugherty said. The study did not examine what was behind the increase. The overall number of U.S. births declined slightly in 2015 to 3.97 million from 3.98 million the year before, according to the CDC. The drop followed an increase in 2014, the first since 2007, the agency said. REUTERS

VERIZON TO CLOSE CALL CENTERS IN 5 STATES

3 Verizon Communications Inc. plans to close call centers in five states, including its home state of New York, the No. 1 U.S. wireless company said Thursday. The move, which will affect about 3,200 workers, is a part of Verizon's effort to consolidate customer-service operations across the United States. The company, which recently agreed to buy Yahoo Inc. for $4.8 billion, is looking to tap new revenue in areas such as digital media and advertising outside the oversaturated wireless market. "We are realigning our real estate portfolio and relocating these centers into other centers where we have extra capacity," Verizon spokeswoman Kim Ancin said. The consolidation involves Verizon call centers near Rochester and Orangeburg, New York; Bangor, Maine; Lincoln, Nebraska; Wallingford and Meriden, Connecticut; and Rancho Cordoba, California, the company said.

REUTERS

METRO'S NEWS QUIZ

You read Metro to stay on top of the news. Now's your chance to find out how much you know. Take our daily news quiz to test your knowledge by going to **www.metro.us/news-quiz** to submit your answers.

1. What prompted Geno's Steaks to remove its "Speak English" sign from its window?

2. Who will be the Eagles starter at right tackle against Washington?

3. Who plays one of the feds tracking Ben Affleck down in "The Accountant"?

A sign at Geno's Steaks that reads: "This Is America: When Ordering "Speak English,"" is seen on June 13, 2006. GETTY IMAGES

Geno's Steaks quietly removes controversial 'speak English' sign

The sign prompted a 21-month court fight that ended in Vento's favor.

ALEXIS SACHDEV
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Philadelphians know there's an appropriate way to order a cheesesteak. But one famed South Philly steak shop took it a step further, requiring its visitors — many of whom were tourists — to order in English.

"This is AMERICA," a contentious sign posted at Geno's Steaks declared. "When ordering, 'speak English.'"

The sign was taken down Wednesday night, Philly Chit Chat first reported, for reasons still unknown.

An employee at the shop confirmed to Metro on Thursday morning that indeed the sign had been removed, but stayed mum on any further details. Geno's publicist has not returned a request for comment.

The shop's late founder, Joey Vento, who posted the sign in 2006 as a political statement on immigration reform, went to court for almost 21 months to defend that decision. Though civil rights groups and activists claimed the sign was discriminatory and intimidating, even drawing comparisons to Jim Crow laws, the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations ruled Vento could keep the sign, arguing there was no indication he would actually turn away service.

Geno's added a sign below its "Speak English," one that said management reserves the right to refuse service.

The sign outlived Vento, who died in 2011.

The store's public relations firm told Philly mag in 2013 that it was Vento's "dying wish" to keep the sign, but that the firm urged his son Geno Vento, who took over the eatery, to take it down.

"Our client has reported to us, that per our strong recommendation the 'American's don't press #2' sign has been removed," Kylie Flett with Neff Associates public relations said in an email to Philly mag at the time. "I can also tell you that we STRONGLY recommended to Geno Vento that the 'speak English' sign be removed also. Our recommendation is currently under consideration by the Geno's team. Unfortunately, Joey's dying wish to his son was for the sign to remain, and Geno at this time is choosing to respect his father's request."

Upon hearing news of the sign's removal, one of its longtime opponents told Metro she was glad.

"It's about time! Long overdue!" wrote Camille Zubrinsky Charles, director of the Center for Africana studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

During Vento's hearing with the PCHR, Charles testified that the sign was like "whites only" signs during the Jim Crow era.

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BRIEFS

Protest calls for disbanding of SRC as top members leave
Activists from the Our City Our Schools campaign rallied Thursday outside the School District of Philadelphia to demand an end to the School Reform Commission's control of Philly schools.

The commission was instituted in 2001 by the state to replace the existing school board, mostly over reportedly mismanaged finances. Public school and teachers union members have long criticized the School Reform Commission's (SRC) leadership, which has a majority of members appointed by the governor and some appointed by the Philadelphia mayor.

Members Marjorie Neff and Feather Houstoun both recently announced their resignations, and the protest comes as Mayor Jim Kenney and Gov. Tom Wolf consider their picks for replacements.

Wolf favors abolishing the commission, but said he can't do it alone.

"He does not have unilateral authority to do so," a spokesman said. "The governor remains focused on greater investment in our schools."

K-12 education funding has seen a $415 million boost since Wolf took office two years ago, including nearly $100 million for Philadelphia, according to the governor's office.

SAM NEWHOUSE

A protest outside the School District of Philadelphia headquarters, against the School Reform Commission
CHARLES MOSTOLLER

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Chestnut Hill College PROVIDED

Philly college on defensive after City Council issues denunciation over racial issues

City Council passed a resolution critiquing a local college's fight against racism findings.

SAM NEWHOUSE
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sam.newhouse@metro.us

In a city boasting several prestigious universities, Chestnut Hill College is one of the city's smaller schools, located in one of the city's leafy northwestern neighborhoods.

But now it's at the center of attention in Philadelphia City Council, where a resolution passed Thursday denounced the 2,400-student Catholic college for "seeking exemption from anti-discrimination laws."

The school was trying to "turn back the clock on civil rights," said City Councilwoman Helen Gym in a news release.

"The college is refusing to take accountability for Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission findings of racial discrimination and is instead appealing its case to the Commonwealth Court on the basis of religious freedom," Gym said. "We are urging Chestnut Hill to withdraw its appeal."

The school disagreed with that characterization.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," school spokesman Kevin Feeley said of the council's resolution. "Chestnut Hill College has no intention of circumventing anti-discrimination laws."

The resolution surfaced as the school appeals a 2015 Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) finding of "probable cause" in complaints of racial bias in the 2012 expulsion of a black student over alleged embezzlement, who later complained to the PHRC.

The resolution references findings from the commission's report, including that white students charged with similar cases got "lenient sentences such as mediation or writing reflection papers, always with the possibility of re-enrollment," while every African-American student charged with a violation "was expelled or suspended," without further support from the school.

Feeley said the findings of the commission were just allegations, not facts.

"Those are allegations only. They have never ever been tested or proven in any type of legal proceeding," he said. "We believe the allegations are completely false, and we are fully prepared to demonstrate that."

The resolution specifically targets the strategy behind the college's appeal of the PHRC commission's finding of "probable cause" of racial mistreatment. Their appeal in Commonwealth Court questioned whether as a Catholic school, they are under the authority of that commission.

For expanded version, visit metro.us

Cafes line Rittenhouse Square. GETTY IMAGES

Why Philadelphia bombed this 'Foodie Cities' ranking

WalletHub ranked Philly 41st of 150 cities.

ALEXIS SACHDEV
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If Philadelphia prides itself in being a "foodie" city, then this one is going to hurt.

In its latest list, 2016's Best & Worst Foodie Cities, WalletHub analyzed 150 metropolitan cities in the nation, Philly ranked No. 41 — nowhere near the top.

The ranking looked at two key dimensions — affordability and diversity, accessibility and quality — and measured metrics like the average cost of groceries, sales and restaurant taxes, access to craft breweries, farmers markets, food trucks and other establishments, and the ratio of full-service to fast-food restaurants.

So where did Philly go wrong? WalletHub ranked Philly No. 131 when it came to the average cost of groceries, and No. 114 for the number of craft breweries and wineries per capita.

If a basket of groceries on the national average costs $100, Philadelphia's index at 115.80 means that same basket costs nearly $16 more in Philly, WalletHub analyst Jill Gonzalez explained to the Philadelphia Business Journal earlier this week.

To be fair, Philadelphia doesn't even have wineries within its city limits. If you're looking for a vineyard tour, head on out to Chester, Delaware or Montgomery counties.

That said, Philly earned major points for not levying a grocery or restaurant tax, and its high number of food trucks and grocery stores per capita.

Orlando, Portland, Miami, Tampa and San Francisco swept the top 5 spots on WalletHub's study. While the Bay Area ranked 77th in affordability (Philly all around came in No. 33), the city pulled higher in diversity, accessibility and quality.

Still, foodies around the country disagree with WalletHub's assessment. The Washington Post, Thrillist, Travel + Leisure, Zagat, Frommers, GQ and The New York Times have continuously sung the high praises of our foodie (and boozy) scene, from East Passyunk to West Philly.

BRIEFS

PSPCA removes 19 cats from unlicensed South Philly Persian cat 'breeder'

Law enforcement officials rescued 19 cats from a South Philly home where a self-identified Persian cat breeder was apparently neglecting their health, the PSPCA announced.

The Persian-style cats were found in a home on the 1800 block of West Passyunk Avenue on Tuesday after the PSPCA received an anonymous tip.

Philadelphia city ordinance prohibits ownership of more than 12 domestic animals in one home.

The PSPCA said all the cats were removed from the home "due to concerns over poor health requiring medical attention."

The cats range in age from a two-month-old kitten to adult cats.

An investigation is ongoing and charges are pending, the PSPCA said. But 17 of the cats were signed over to the PSPCA by the owner and will be treated at PSPCA headquarters before being put up for adoption.

ISTOCK

The other two cats not signed over are also at the PSPCA in medical treatment, pending the resolution of charges against the owner.

Anyone with information about cases of animal cruelty is urged to call Pennsylvania SPCA's Cruelty Hotline at 866-601-SPCA.

SAM NEWHOUSE

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Florida declares new area of Zika transmission in Miami

Florida Gov. Rick Scott said state health officials have confirmed that local transmission of the mosquito-borne Zika virus is occurring in a new small area in Miami-Dade County, where the state believes two women and three men have been infected by the virus.

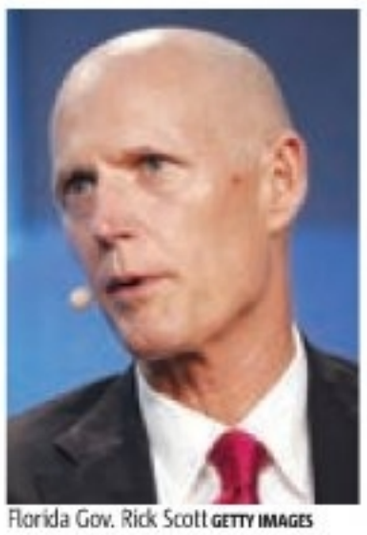
Florida officials on Thursday announced a new area of Zika transmission in the Miami region and have called on the federal government for funding to help fight the outbreak.

The governor said the state's health department believes Zika transmission is only occurring in Miami-Beach and in the new area, which covers about 1 square mile.

Zika, which is spread primarily by mosquitoes but also sexually, is a concern for pregnant women and their partners because the virus has been liked with a series of birth defects including microcephaly, marked by small head size and underdeveloped brains that can lead to severe developmental problems in babies.

Last month, U.S. health officials urged pregnant women to consider putting off all nonessential travel to Miami due to the Zika virus even as the state lifted a travel warning for the Wynwood, the Miami neighborhood which was the first site of local Zika transmission in the continental United States.

Florida has reported a total of 164 cases of Zika caused by local mosquito transmission, including



Florida Gov. Rick Scott GETTY IMAGES

19 people who were infected in the state but live elsewhere. There are also five cases in which it was not clear whether transmission occurred in Florida or elsewhere.

In a statement released on Thursday, Scott said the announcement of the new area of transmission underscores the "urgent need" for federal funding to fight the virus, adding that the state still has not received any of the funding that was approved by Congress and signed by President Barack Obama two weeks ago.

Scott said he has asked the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to work directly with the Miami-Dade Mosquito Control District to identify best practices for defeating Zika in the new area.

Florida officials had already reported four of the five cases of Zika that occurred in the new area of transmission in Miami-Dade County. "With the confirmation of today's case, this area now meets the CDC's criteria for a new zone," officials said in a statement.

The Zika virus was first detected in Brazil last year and has since spread across the Americas. It has been linked to more than 1,800 cases of microcephaly in Brazil. REUTERS

Sources: US investigators see suicide behind Conn. plane crash

Investigators believe a Jordanian student pilot was trying to kill himself when he crashed a small plane in Connecticut this week but do not believe he was affiliated with militant groups, federal officials familiar with the probe said.

Feras Freitekh, 28, was with a flight instructor in a twin-engine Piper PA-34 Seneca when the plane slammed into a utility pole on Tuesday and burst into flames in East Hartford. Freitekh died in the crash and the instructor was badly injured.

The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board said on Wednesday that its initial investigation indicated the crash was "the result of an intentional act," and the FBI joined the probe.

Investigators came to believe that the crash was a suicide attempt by Freitekh after speaking with the instructor, said the two officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

There is no evidence Freitekh shouted religious statements before the crash and nothing else pointing to terrorism, the officials said. Freitekh had not been known to U.S. intelligence agencies.

East Hartford Police Lieutenant Joshua Litwin said at a news conference on Wednesday that he did not know who was flying the plane at the time of the crash. The aircraft had two sets of controls, allowing either person to pilot the plane.

Freitekh and the instructor, Arian Prevalla, argued and fought for control before the crash, the Hartford Courant reported on Wednesday, citing unidentified sources. REUTERS

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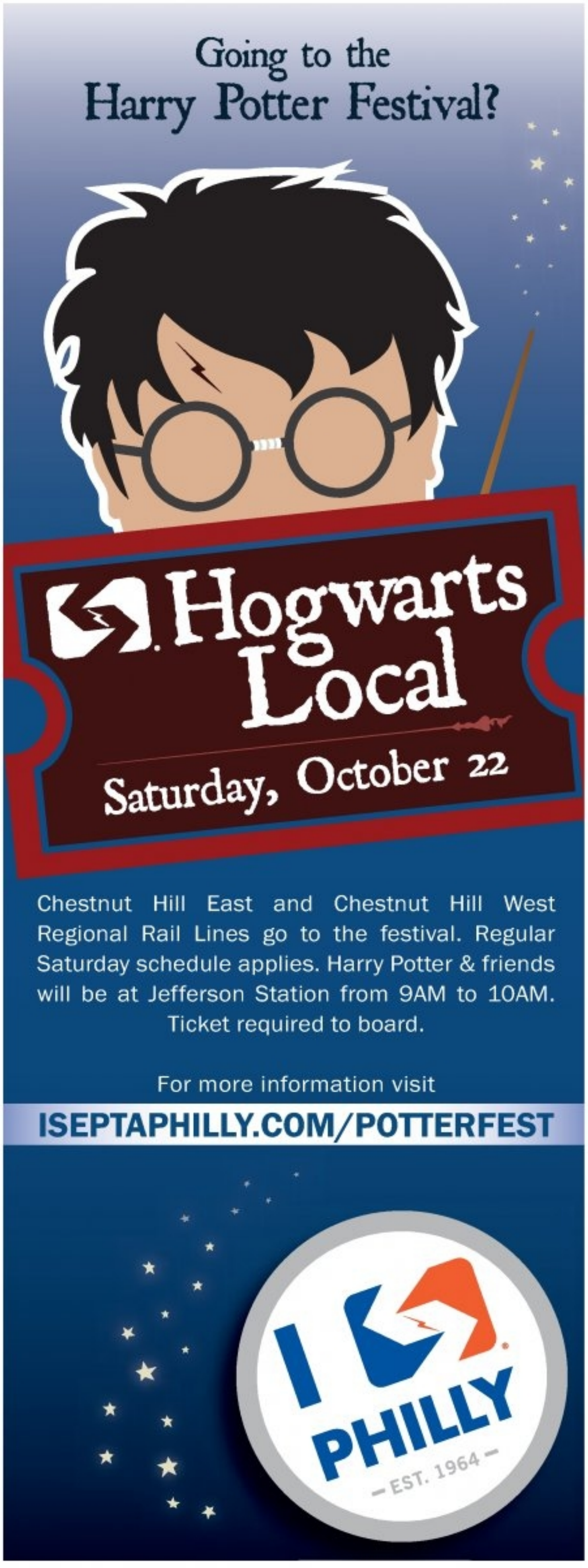
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Accused NY bomber pleads not guilty from hospital bed

Ahmad Khan Rahimi, 28, whose last name had previously been reported as Rahami, appeared via live video on a television screen in a courtroom in Elizabeth, New Jersey, from the hospital where he has been recovering from gunshot wounds suffered during a shootout with police.

Ahmad Khan Rahimi in a police mugshot UNION COUNTY, N.J., PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

The man accused of last month's bombings in New York and New Jersey that injured dozens of people made his first court appearance on Thursday from a hospital bed, pleading not guilty to attempting to murder police officers.

With his court-appointed lawyer, Peter Liguori, standing bedside in hospital scrubs, Rahimi lay still with a blanket pulled up to his neck during the hearing.

Rahimi, said by U.S. authorities to have been inspired by radial jihadism, spoke in a quiet voice, answering "yes" to several questions from Union County Superior Court Judge Regina Caulfield about whether he understood the charges and wished Liguori to represent him.

Liguori told the judge that his client's last name was spelled "Rahimi."

The hearing, which lasted only a few minutes, concerned state charges against him stemming from a gunfight with police on Sept. 19, after an officer discovered him sleeping in the doorway of a bar.

Rahimi, a U.S. citizen born in Afghanistan, is also facing federal charges of using weapons of mass destruction and bombing a place of public use in New York and New Jersey.

He is accused of setting off an explosive in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood that injured 31 people as well as a pipe bomb near a charity running race in a New Jersey shore town on Sept. 17.

In addition, Rahimi is charged with planting another pressure-cooker bomb in Chelsea that did not go off and with leaving several devices at a train station in Elizabeth, just blocks from the courthouse where he appeared on video on Thursday.

One of those explosives detonated when a bomb squad robot attempted to defuse it. None of the blasts killed anyone.

It remains unclear when Rahimi will appear in federal court, but it is likely he will face charges there before New Jersey's state case proceeds to trial.

The hearing had been delayed while Rahimi, who was unconscious for weeks, recovered from his injuries. Two officers suffered injuries in the shootout, and at least one of them attended the hearing on Thursday. REUTERS

BRIEF

Report: Manhattan office market booming as asking rents set record

The cost of renting office space in Manhattan set new records in the third quarter amid strong leasing activity that was driven by a job creation rate in New York that exceeds the nationwide average, according to brokerage Colliers International.

Leasing activity across Manhattan is 13.8 percent above the city's 10-year average, and year-to-date is 11.1 percent better than 2015, a banner year for commercial real estate in New York, the brokerage said on Thursday.

New York has created 89,000 new private sector jobs in the 12 months ended August, a 2.4 percent increase that tops the U.S. job gains rate of 1.9 percent, Colliers said. REUTERS

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Preliminary NTSB report confirms train was speeding before Hoboken crash

Modified service resumed this week on eight of the station's 17 tracks.

NJ Transit train seen through the wreckage GETTY IMAGES

The New Jersey Transit train that crashed into Hoboken Station on Sept. 29 was going more than twice the station speed limit, a preliminary report released Thursday by the National Transportation Safety Board confirmed.

While the NTSB did not state the cause of the crash, it did confirm that the emergency-braking system was employed by the train engineer less than one second before the train collided with a bumping post on Track 5 and then struck a terminal wall.

A woman standing on the platform was killed, and more than 100 passengers and crewmembers were injured.

After investigators downloaded data from the train's event recorder last week, they discovered the train began to speed up about 38 seconds before the crash, reaching 21 mph when it struck the post.

The engineer, Tommy Gallagher, told investigators that the train was traveling at 10 mph when it entered the terminal track and that he woke up on the cab floor after the crash and "has no memory" of it, according to the report.

Modified service resumed on eight of Hoboken Station's 17 tracks on Monday, NJT said, adding that tracks 1 through 9 will remain closed as repair work continues. NIKKI M. MASCALI

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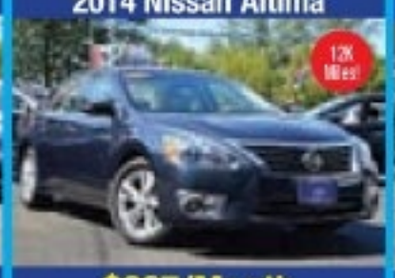

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‘Greatest living poet’ Bob Dylan wins Nobel literature prize

ILLUSTRATION BY BILLY BECERRA, METRO

The 75-year-old Dylan — who won the prize for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition” — now finds himself in the company of Winston Churchill, Thomas Mann and Rudyard Kipling as Nobel laureates.

Bob Dylan, regarded as the voice of a generation for his influential songs from the 1960s onwards, has won the Nobel Prize for Literature in a surprise decision that made him the only singer-songwriter to win the award.

The announcement was met with gasps in Stockholm’s stately Royal Academy Hall, followed — unusually — by some laughter.

Dylan’s songs, such as “Blowin’ in the Wind,” “The Times They Are a-Changin’,” “Subterranean Homesick Blues” and “Like a Rolling Stone” captured a spirit of rebellion, dissent and independence.

More than 50 years on, Dylan is still writing songs and is often on tour, performing his dense poetic lyrics, sung in a sometimes rasping voice that has been ridiculed by detractors.

Some lyrics have resonated for decades.

“Blowin’ in the Wind,” written in 1962, was considered one of the most eloquent folk songs of all time. “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” in which Dylan told Americans “your sons and your daughters are beyond your command,” was an anthem of the civil rights movement and Vietnam War protests.

Awarding the 8 million Swedish crown ($930,000) prize, the Swedish Academy said: “Dylan has the status of an icon. His influence on contemporary music is profound.”

Swedish Academy member Per Wastberg said: “He is probably the greatest living poet.”

Asked if he thought Dylan’s Nobel lecture — traditionally given by the laureate in Stockholm later in the year — would be a concert, he replied: “Let’s hope so.”

Over the years, not everyone has agreed that Dylan was a poet of the first order. Novelist Norman Mailer countered: “If Dylan’s a poet, I’m a basketball player.”

Sara Danius, permanent secretary of the Nobel Academy, told a news conference there was “great unity” in the panel’s decision to give Dylan the prize.

Dylan has always been an enigmatic figure. He went into seclusion for months after a motorcycle crash in 1966, leading to stories that he had cracked under the pressure of his new celebrity.

He was born into a Jewish family but in the late 1970s converted to born-again Christianity and later said he followed no organized religion. At another point in his life, Dylan took up boxing.

Dylan’s spokesman, Elliott Mintz, declined immediate comment when reached by phone, citing the early hour in Los Angeles, where it was 3 a.m. at the time of the announcement. Dylan was due to give a concert in Las Vegas on Thursday evening.

Literature was the last of this year’s Nobel Prizes to be awarded. The prize is named after dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel and has been awarded since 1901 for achievements in science, literature and peace in accordance with his will.

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Nigeria's Boko Haram frees 21 kidnapped girls

Jihadist group Boko Haram has freed 21 of more than 200 girls it kidnapped in April 2014 in the northern Nigerian town of Chibok, after mediation by Switzerland and the International Red Cross, officials said.

Around 270 girls were taken from their school in Chibok in the remote northeastern Borno state, where Boko Haram has waged a seven-year insurgency aimed at creating an Islamic state, killing thousands and displacing more than two million people.

"I met them about an hour ago and I can confirm they are in good health," Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo said after meeting the 21 released girls, who were brought from the northeastern city of Maiduguri to the capital Abuja.

Their release, a boost for the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, came after the Red Cross and the Swiss government brokered a deal with the group, officials said.

Dozens had escaped in the initial melee in 2014, but more than 200 girls are still missing. The kidnapping prompted outrage worldwide.

"In the next few days or months we will be able to negotiate the release of more of the girls," Osinbajo told reporters.

A picture released by a presidency official showed one of the girls holding a baby when they met Osinbajo. Officials have accused Boko Haram of having married off the girls to its followers.

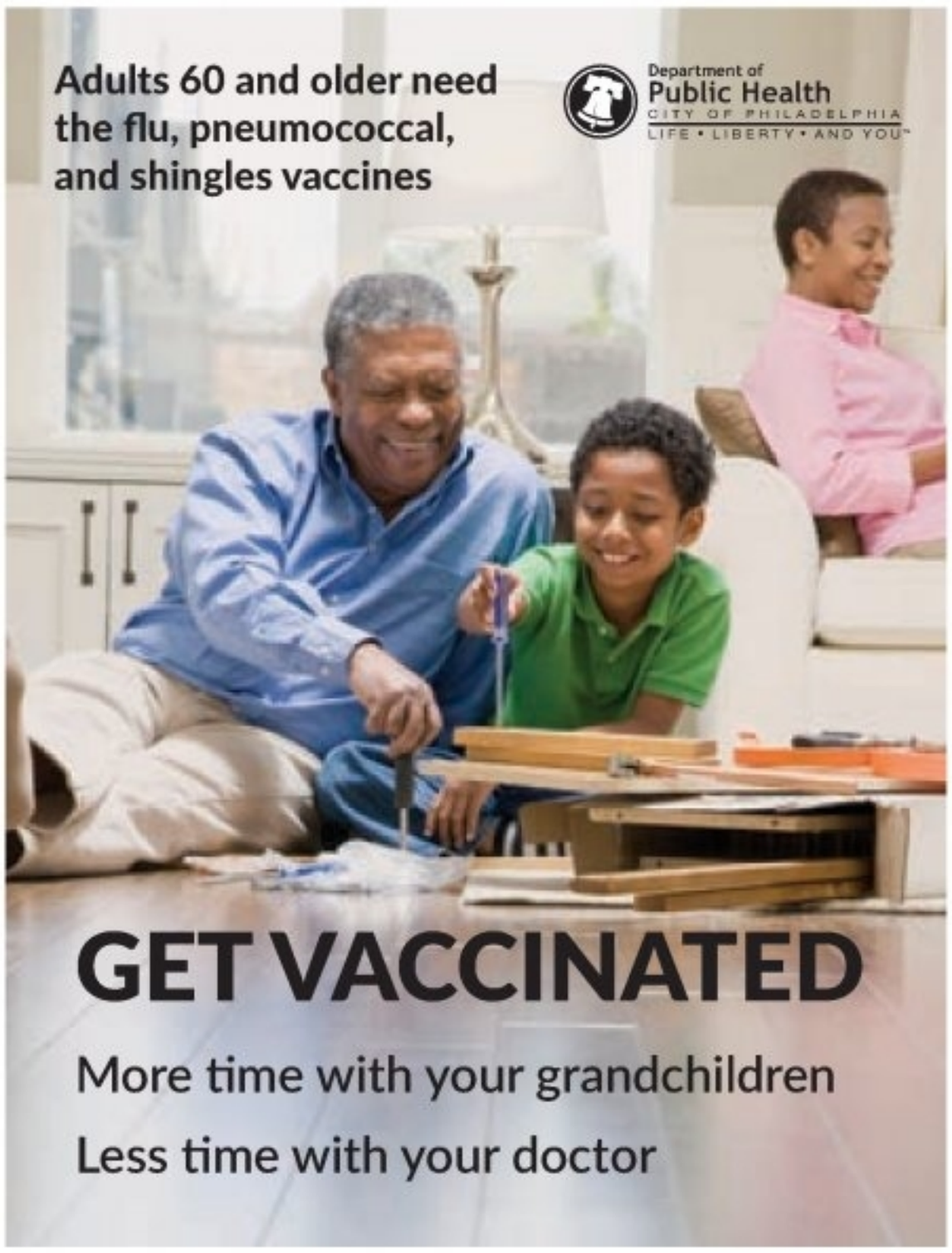
Information Minister Lai Mohammed denied reports that the government had swapped Boko Haram fighters for their release and said he was not aware if any ransom had been paid. He said a Nigerian army operation against Boko Haram would continue.

Some of the freed Chibok school girls at the state House in Abuja, Nigeria. GETTY IMAGES

Switzerland "facilitated contacts between Nigerian representatives and intermediaries of Boko Haram" after a request from Abuja, a Swiss government spokeswoman said.

"We have nothing to add," she said, when asked if it had been a prisoner swap.

In recent days, the Nigerian military has been carrying out a large-scale offensive in the Sambisa forest, a stronghold of Boko Haram, which last year pledged loyalty to the Islamic State militant group. REUTERS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Sanders among five senators asking Obama to order pipeline review

Former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and four other U.S. senators on Thursday called on President Barack Obama to order a comprehensive environmental review of a pipeline project that has stirred widespread opposition from Native Americans and environmental activists.

After a federal appeals court on Sunday night denied a request to halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the senators asked Obama to direct the Army Corps of Engineers to complete a full environmental impact statement, including stronger tribal consultation, for a contested part of the route.

"The project's current permits should be suspended and all construction stopped until a complete environmental and cultural review has been completed for the entire project," said the letter by Sanders and Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein, Ed Markey, Patrick Leahy and Benjamin Cardin.

Bernie Sanders GETTY IMAGES

Also on Thursday, the governments of 19 cities, including St. Louis and Minneapolis, passed ordinances to support the Standing Rock tribe in opposition of the pipeline.

In recent weeks, protests against the Dakota Access pipeline led by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota have drawn international attention, prompting the U.S. government to temporarily block construction on federal land.

Tribal leaders say the pipeline will desecrate land and pollute water, especially around the planned crossing through Lake Oahe, a sacred site. Opposition to the pipeline has drawn support from 200 Native American tribes.

On Tuesday, anti-pipeline activists in four states, in solidarity with the Dakota pipeline protesters, closed pipeline valves to halt the flow of crude through arteries transporting 15 percent of U.S. oil consumption. REUTERS

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VOTEPOCALYPSE?

TOM FOREMAN

Opinion

CNN's Tom Foreman is the author of the book "My Year of Running Dangerously." @tomforemancnn

If this election were a postapocalyptic thriller (it is), I might be frightened (I am) and you'd be justified retreating into the mountains to hoard gold and set rabbit snares (you are … be my guest). Every day we are greeted by a fresh army of partisans staggering like zombies toward the cameras spouting all sorts of vile innuendoes, lies and warnings about the consequences of this vote.

Just this week, Donald Trump called Hillary Clinton "the devil." I'm pretty sure his statement is wrong, because last I heard, the devil went down to Georgia and hasn't been on Expedia since. "Please enter your full name? Two blanks. Hmmm … Beelzebub is too short and Lord of Darkness is too long."

And no less than The New York Times has highlighted Clinton's eschatological claim about Trump: "I'm the last thing standing between you and the apocalypse." That can't be right. My wife has already assured me the apocalypse is coming anyway if I leave my running socks on the coffee table again.

To quote Walter Sobchak: "Has the whole world gone crazy?"

I've been speaking almost every week with people in Canada lately (investing in rental properties, just in case) and let me tell you, they are watching us the way you watch divorcing neighbors when their fight spills into the driveway; meaning they are horrified, amused and fascinated — all while simultaneously bracing to dodge gunfire.

And mostly they are incredulous. "How did this happen?" they ask.

I start talking about the vagaries of the primary system, party machinations, and the electoral college … then suddenly I'm rattling about billionaires in beauty pageant dressing rooms, secret email servers, hidden tax returns, clandestine speeches and "Oh hell," I say, "apparently the world is ending."

I hope I'm wrong. Actually, I suspect no matter who wins the Republic will find a way to keep keeping on. But if you will excuse I'm going to wrap this up now. I need to go buy some bottled water and canned goods. In so many ways, "the end is nigh!"

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Ben Affleck plays a number cruncher with some very dastardly clients (who can also kick some butt) in "The Accountant." CHUCK ZLOTNICK

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THE FUN STARTS HERE

Affleck stays true

The star talks "The Accountant" and the difficulties of raising children.

MATT PRIGGE
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Ben Affleck doesn't see a lot of similarities between Bruce Wayne and Christian Wolff, the number cruncher — and also ass kicker — he plays in "The Accountant." But if pressed, he has an answer: "Same chin," he replies, joking about one of his most famous features.

In the thriller, Affleck plays an autistic man who became not just an accountant, but an accountant with ties to the mafia and other fearful clients. His work has aroused suspicion by the feds (including one played by J.K. Simmons), who want to bring him in. But Christian isn't going quietly; he's a man of mystery and rather good with a gun, as well as a fist.

As a thriller about a private man of action, "The Accountant" is superficially similar to some of his recent movies, notably his current stint as Batman, so far seen in "Batman v Superman" and "Suicide Squad." But it's different enough for Affleck's tastes.

"I'm not much of a tactician when it comes to what a career should look like," Affleck says during a news conference. "It's more about projects that interest and move me. Part of that is variation. You could become bored doing the same thing over and over again. This keeps me activated and engaged."

One thing that's different is the fight scenes. With Batman, Affleck could defer to a stuntman, since Bruce Wayne tends to keep his mask on when not pummeling goons (or Superman). Not in "The Accountant."

"It's a lot harder for the stuntman to do your stunt when you're not wearing a mask," he explains. "I had to really be on top of my game and work hard with some really great professionals who were really good at educating me about this fighting style. It was a learning experience."

"The Accountant" also touches on the perils of parenting. Christian was raised by a father who didn't want him to go to a school for autistic children. Instead he taught his son how to fight, leading him to a life outside the law.

"That's what I thought was the most heartbreaking part of the story," Affleck reveals. "As a parent, I face dilemmas every day. What's the right way to raise children? Every moment there's a crossroad; there's a lot of choices you can make. We all make mistakes, for sure. We try our best. As they say, when you have kids, all of a sudden your heart is outside your body. All of a sudden you feel vulnerable. This fear of a child being vulnerable is really powerful."

Still, he understands on some level why Christian's dad thought his delicate son needed to learn how to fight.

"He does it out of love and compassion and fear for his son — and he ends up brutalizing him," Affleck says. "It's really interesting to look at what's the appropriate way to channel these intense emotions we have as parents. It's not easy."

And at least he didn't have to direct. Affleck's third film as director, the crime drama "Live by Night," arrives in January, and he's helming the next Batman movie, currently titled simply "The Batman," himself. But he still likes working for others.

"As an actor, movies are all about the director. I've learned that, finally," he says, chuckling. "When you work with a director you're on his or her ship. Your job is to be creative, but to fulfill this person's vision." And there's an extra perk: "The nice thing about acting is once the set falls down you can just go back to your trailer. So many things are not my problem!"

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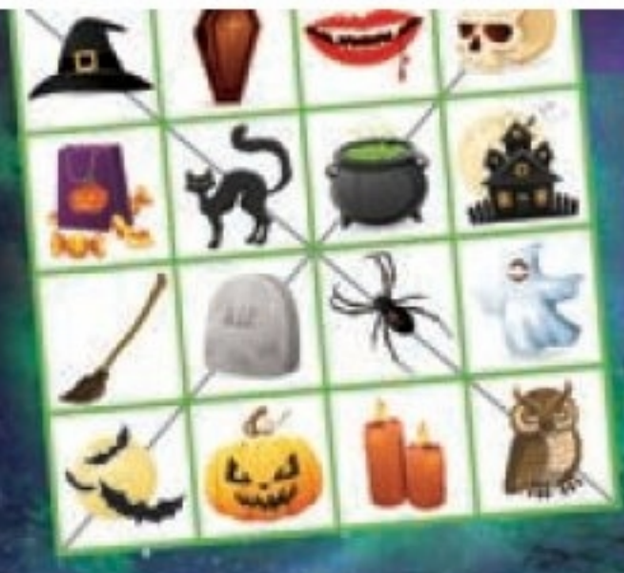

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"The Accountant"

Director: Gavin O'Connor
Stars: Ben Affleck, Anna Kendrick
Rating: R

●●○○○

In "The Accountant," Ben Affleck is as good at scribbling numbers on windows with Sharpies as he is at splattering brains all over walls. CHUCK ZLOTNICK

It's a perfect name, "The Accountant." This might be a Ben Affleck vehicle about a brainiac who can also take out a house full of armed baddies, but it's as dense and confusing as the annual trip to H&R Block, minus the satisfaction that your tax woes are for another year over. Every scene and shot is meticulous, but not in a way that draws you in; it's suffocating, like a politician trying to defend Obamacare in the 30 seconds before the buzzer. Everything's so crammed and asphyxiating you can't help leave wondering if the filmmakers wanted you to think this was meant to launch a franchise or what in the hell.

Even describing the basics of the plot feels like unleashing spoilers into the world. There's the accountant himself, Affleck's Christian Wolff, an autistic kid who grew up to be a super-nerd who does taxes, but also crunches numbers for giant companies. He's also been known to loan his services out to the mafia and — why not? — he's also a killer sharpshooter who likes big guns. His shady practices have peaked the interest of both the feds (embodied by J.K. Simmons and Cynthia Addai-Robinson) and also some scary dudes (led by Jon Bernthal, enjoyable).

How will this all tie together? How close to the ending will it get before we even know what the story is? "The Accountant" is a staunch subscriber to This Will All Make Sense in the End Syndrome, which in the right hands can be seductive. Christopher Nolan has the skill to do it well, but he seems to guard his secret recipe like it was the KFC Colonel's chicken. Usually you get Zack Snyder's mangled, depressing stabs at same. Or you get "The Accountant," a drag that matches the tenor of its star's performance, which could best be described as a sleepy robot.

And so you get a lot of plot tangled like Christmas lights dragged out of a basement closet, enlivened by the occasional shoot-out, and the tease of fine actors, who are mostly called on to show up and spout exposition. Apparently Jeffrey Tambor is in there, but his two appearances, buried in flashbacks, are so blink-and-miss he may ultimately feel like a hallucination. No movie where our hero walks around with both a sriracha and a "Disco Sucks" T-shirt can be said to have zero sense of humor, but it's still a movie where someone's forced to say "I like incongruity," and which presents scenes of Chris beating himself like an Opus Dei monk, in a room to strobe lights and deafening speed metal, with no apparent humor. Handsome budget and first-rate actors and all, it plays like a pilot that was never picked up, and rightly so.

MATT PRIGGE

"Kevin Hart: What Now" finds the comic selling out Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field, i.e., a freakin' football field, in 2015. FRANK MASI

"Kevin Hart: What Now"

Director: Leslie Small, Tim Story
Stars: Kevin Hart, Halle Berry
Rating: R

●●●○○

The movies don't know what to do with Kevin Hart. How could they? Like a lot of comics, he is — we swear this isn't another "Kevin Hart is short" joke — too big for the screen, too explosive for the likes of the "Ride Along" or its sequel, "Get Hard" or "Central Intelligence." He's best when he's on his own, feeding off not co-stars but a rapt, Roman Colosseum-size audience, free to surf down deep, weird neural passageways toward bits about crotch-grabbing raccoons.

His concert movies are where he really thrives — in theory. "Let Me Explain," his second, ran 71 minutes and was still padded-out with a 20-minute, joke-free overture. "What Now," his third, has a lengthy intro, too — a Bond parody that, a decent subtitle gag and some Don Cheadle ball-busting aside, serves as a reminder that he's best without a script. That's clear once the big show starts. Caterwauling about Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field's stage, he brags about the night's record-breaking crowd and concludes by calling it "the best night of my f—ing life."

To be honest, it's merely a better-than-average show. There's a theme: What, indeed, now? Now that he's super rich, now that he's in the L.A. suburbs, now that he's an undeniable icon attracting a rainbow-colored crowd. Does he still have jokes? He does, but he's mostly an ADD-addled man-child, breaking free of his own constraints, spinning off loopy running gags about people without shoulders and, in the most sustained stretch, a story involving "The Conjuring," his famously cranky dad and a malfunctioning wheelchair.

Hart is always funny, even when his material is just all right; he has enough energy for a hydrogen bomb. He's outsold Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy, so we might as well compare them: Hart lacks their discipline, their sputtering genius. Both sometimes looked like they were having nervous breakdowns in front of cackling throngs. Hart is more calculated with his confessions, more brand than keeping it 100. Still, spotty though he may be, it's always a pleasure to watch the man work. MP

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"American Honey"

Director: Andrea Arnold
Stars: Sasha Lane, Shia LaBeouf
Rating: R

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Sasha Lane, an amateur discovered on a Spring Break trip, makes her acting debut in Andrea Arnold's road trip picture "American Honey." A24

Andrea Arnold's "American Honey" has moments of sublime transcendence. It also has moments where sledgehammer meets cranium. It's a big movie — some 162 minutes — and big enough for us to suggest something weird: Perhaps a movie this size can contain good and bad, profound and obvious, a thrilling newcomer and Shia LaBeouf with a hideous eyebrow ring and braided rat tail. It's imperfect, just like its teenage hero. Both characters and movies make dumb mistakes. They're both unformed. And they both build themselves into a kind of shape before our eyes. That's what's thrilling about it.

What's never in doubt is the talents of its star. Sasha Lane — whom the English filmmaker Arnold ("Fish Tank," "Wuthering Heights") discovered on a Florida beach during spring break — is a natural onscreen, at once fiery and vulnerable. She plays Star, an 18-year-old who whimsically ditches her miserable, go-nowhere, Middle America digs to join up with a roving gang of runaway youngs, who tour the country in a dilapidated bus, scamming people with magazine subscriptions. Of course, they're also being scammed: Their boss (Riley Keough) has essentially rendered them indentured servants, always threatening them with beatings or abandonment in the middle of nowhere.

Arnold can't resist the occasional flailing stab at profundity: Keough at one point wears a Confederate flag bikini; there are plentiful shots of birds or critters scampering about electrical lines; at one point Star gets into an intense stare-off with a bear. But such lumbering symbolism has the perverse effect of making "American Honey" rougher, more interesting. For one thing, they make its actual majestic moments even more magical: Star's Rihanna-backed meet-cute with the gang in a Wal-Mart; her sudden run-off with a gang of predatory-or-are-they aging cowboys; a later, more skeezy "date" with an oil worker.

"American Honey" isn't always, or even often, this electric. It doesn't need to be. Watching it simulates the experience of not just being in the moment, but being on an aimless journey. Our mind might wander: Does the presence of someone as famous as Shia LaBeouf, as Keough's underling, ruin the naturalism? Or does it prove this isn't actually about realism but actually quite stylized and controlled? However obvious it can sometimes be, it's not obvious how to process "American Honey." It lingers like an experience you actually lived.

MATT PRIGGE

"Denial"

Director: Mick Jackson
Stars: Rachel Weisz, Timothy Spall
Rating: R

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"Denial" is a cinematic subtweet. See if this sounds familiar: A ghoulish, self-promoting charlatan tries to pollute the populace with bigoted ideas based on purest b.s. He brags about his lack of credentials, he's reluctant to make private documents public, he belittles his adversaries with cruel jokes and, if successful, his actions would make the world considerably worse. Oh, and his fiercest opponent is a smart and capable woman, whom he loves to shout down and mansplain.

If you guessed that this is the story of how historian Deborah Lipstadt battled Holocaust denier David Irving in the 1990s, then you're right! If it sounds like this tale, intentionally or not, says a lot about America's current presidential hellscape, then you're also correct. It's the perfect movie to watch as the Trump-Hillary debates unfold, even if we currently only know that one of these stories has a happy ending.

Rachel Weisz adopts a chirpy Queens accent as Lipstadt, an Emory University professor who's made her career forcefully debunking Holocaust debunkers. When her latest book draws the ire of Irving (Timothy Spall, slim and looking very Droopy Dog), the deniers' most boisterous and quip-heavy mascot, who essentially blackmails her into proving, in a rigid and detached English court, that the Final Solution is provable.

What follows is a squarely directed (by the maker of "Volcano") yet precisely written (by David Hare) and enjoyably acted history lesson. It plays broadly, but make no mistake: It's smart; it doesn't flatten every nuance or specific detail, even as it builds to a rabble-rousing climax. We must never forget the Holocaust. We must also never forget people like David Irving. Swindlers like him are always ready to fleece the public, prey on peoples' worst and most gullible instincts. If we don't recognize a wolf as a wolf, one may wind up on our television sets getting historic Nielsen ratings. Not that we're equating Donald Trump with someone who denies the Holocaust; after all, at least David Irving could actually write a book. MP

In "Denial," Rachel Weisz plays noted historian Deborah Lipstadt, who went up against Holocaust denier David Irving (played by Timothy Spall) in the 1990s. LAURIE SPARHAM, BLEECKER STREET

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YG gets personal, political on 'Still Brazy'

The rapper isn't afraid to go all-in on sensitive topics.

CHRIS LEO PALERMINO
@indiecalp
letters@metro.us

YG tackles tough topics and takes on Donald Trump on his June Def Jam release, "Still Brazy." GETTY IMAGES

The Compton, California-based rapper's second album, called "Still Brazy," dives into figuring out who shot him last year, gangster culture, anti-police brutality and his hatred of Donald Trump. Heavy? Perhaps, but YG isn't afraid to get into it.

"I'm talking about the s— I've been through with my homies, my robbing history when I was young, my gang s—, all that," says YG, whose birth name is Keenon Jackson. "That [was] dangerous so it just stand out the most."

"Who Shot Me?" is the fearful, incredibly intimate highlight on his follow-up album to 2014's "My Krazy Life." In an exasperated tone, YG repeats the simple question over minor beats. "It was real," says the rapper of the song. "I just got shot like two nights before, so it was real dark for me.

Political overtones

The record ends with three timely tracks: "FDT (F— Donald Trump)," "Blacks & Browns" — about racism against African-Americans and Hispanics — and "Police Get Away Wit Murder."

He even named his fall tour the F— Donald Trump Tour. YG explains, "You kept hearing this motherf—er say and do disrespectful things toward our people, our culture, our race."

West Coast roots

"She gave me my style," he says about his hometown, Compton. "She gave me my outlook on life. She gave me my momma. My mindset — [I've] seen a lot, did a lot, been through a lot."

From early on, the rapper heard his mom play West Coast hip-hop legends like Dr. Dre, N.W.A. and Snoop Dogg as well as '90s R&B.

"That 100 percent has something to do with my rap style and the way I rap," he adds. "The beats I choose. My flows and all of that."

And he isn't afraid to experiment either: the Drake-featuring, hook-laden "Why You Always Hatin?" could be a Top 40 hit.

A rallying cry

While YG notes that he's mostly telling his stories, he does hope his political songs inspire young fans.

"There ain't really no message on here except at the end of the album when I get political. I'm just really talking to the youth and trying to get my fellas to wake up and get more involved with what's going on," he encourages. "Speak up and use your voice."

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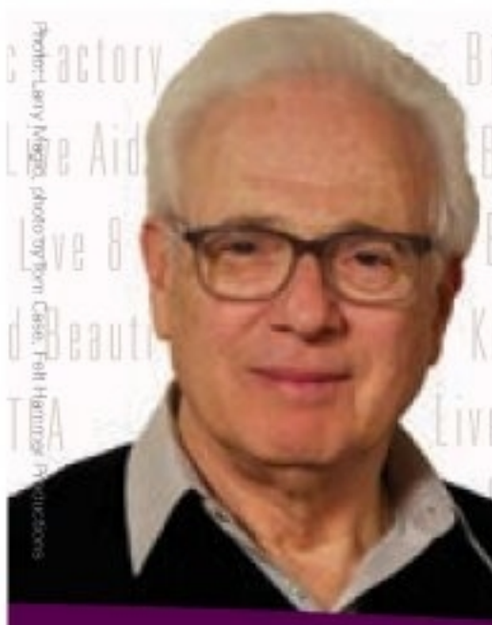

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5 Can't-miss haunted attractions

Get into the Halloween spirit with visits to some of the creepiest destinations in the area. ISTOCK

Terror Behind Walls PROVIDED

It's OK to be scared.

MIKE FENN
@MetroPhilly
letters@metro.us

October is upon us, and that, of course, means haunted attractions are springing up around the tri-state area. As the cool fall air sets in and darkness comes earlier and earlier, thrill seekers of all ages can explore everything from former asylums to dense woods to abandoned prisons for good old-fashioned jump scares. Here is a roundup of can't-miss attractions in the Philadelphia area that are guaranteed to make this Halloween one to remember.

Eastern State Penitentiary

2027 Fairmount Ave.
easternstate.org

Terror Behind the Walls in the Fairmount neighborhood of Philadelphia is an annual classic that draws crowds from within the area and beyond. With top-notch production values and some of the best trained actors around, visitors can expect to experience the terrifying life behind real prison walls. As a bonus, the penitentiary, which is a historic landmark in its own right, remains open for tours even when Terror Behind the Walls is set up. Additionally, whether you are there for a tour or there for the nighttime scares, you can get an up-close look at the site's cold, abandoned prison cells, including that which held infamous gangster Al Capone.

Pennhurst Asylum

Church Street and Bridge Road, Spring City, Pennsylvania
pennhurstasylum.com

Nestled in deep, dark woods in the Chester County town of Spring City, the Pennhurst Asylum is certainly worth the trek from Philadelphia. A functioning state asylum throughout much of the 20th century, it was closed in 1987 after numerous counts of patient abuse and mistreatment surfaced. Left to rot, it was acquired by local preservationists and partially reopened as a museum and recycling center. During the Halloween season, however, the Pennhurst Asylum attraction takes advantage of the site's spooky state and rich history to bring memorable scares to anyone brave enough to enter. Four attractions are situated on the site: the asylum itself, the Dungeon of Lost Souls, Tunnel Terror and Ghost Hunt. The latter option is not rife with character actors or special effects, but is rather a self-guided hunt for restless spirits in the campus' Mayflower Dormitory, which has gone untouched since being abandoned over 25 years ago and is purportedly the most legitimately haunted structure on the property.

Bates Motel and Haunted Hayride

1835 N. Middletown Road, Glen Mills, Pennsylvania
thebatesmotel.com

The dark, winding road that carries Route 352 from Media to Newtown Square in central Delaware County is almost always backed up with traffic waiting to enter the Bates Motel each Halloween season. This 25-year-old staple of the community is situated on the sprawling acres of Arasapha Farm in Glen Mills. Visitors can opt to visit one (or

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Get ready for scares at Frightland in Delaware. FRIGHTLAND

all) of the attraction's three different haunts: the famed Haunted Hayride, the Haunted Corn Maze and, of course, the Bates Motel itself.

Frightland

309 Port Penn Road, Middletown, Delaware
frightland.com

Roughly an hour's drive south of Philadelphia into deep New Castle County, Delaware, lies the award-winning haunted attraction Frightland. During the daylight hours, visitors can enjoy an assortment of carnival amusement rides and light shopping and dining options. When night falls, however, the true spirit of Frightland takes over. Visitors can check out no fewer than eight haunted areas, including the Haunted Barn, the Haunted Hayride and Zombie Prison. Frightland also offers a paranormal ghost hunt.

Terror Behind the Walls is open until Nov. 5 for the 2016 season. PENNHURST ASYLUM

Fright Fest at Six Flags Great Adventure

1 Six Flags Blvd., Jackson, New Jersey
frightfest.sixflags.com

While other amusement parks tend to close their gates for the season once Labor Day comes and goes, the thrills at Six Flags Great Adventure are far from over. At nighttime on select dates throughout October, the sprawling park in Jackson, New Jersey, transforms into Fright Fest, offering visitors the opportunity to check out engaging interactive haunts and frightening (and frighteningly funny) live entertainment shows, including a magic show and circus sideshow. What's more, several rides remain open and even turn up the intensity on their own thrills during the Halloween season.

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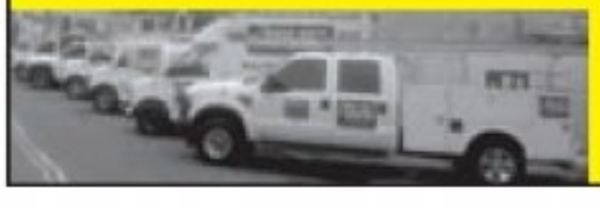

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3 Things to watch for as Eagles look to bounce back against Washington

The Eagles have the toughest upcoming schedule in the entire NFL.

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The bitter taste of Week 5's one-point loss to the Lions is still lingering for every Eagles fan and player after the quarter-season mark passed last week.

But at 3-1, it's hard to complain — especially when considering the team is being led by a rookie quarterback and rookie head coach.

The Eagles will show what they're really made of Sunday afternoon, when they start their conference schedule against Washington. They'll also see Carson Wentz take the field after his first career NFL loss and interception.

Here are three things to watch for as the Week 6 battle approaches:

1 Welcome to the NFL, Big V

The Eagles finally lost Lane Johnson to a 10-game suspension, and named rookie Halapoulivaati Vaitai the starter at right tackle. He's never stepped foot into a regular season NFL game, but the Eagles coaching staff expect him to make a seamless entrance to the Eagles O-line.

"Big V [Vaitai] looks good," Eagles offensive coordinator Frank Reich said. "Big, strong guy; smart, athletic, natural pass setting ability. I'm excited for him to have his opportunity."

If the Eagles' front four can put pressure on Kirk Cousins the defense should have a better day in Week 6. GETTY IMAGES

Being thrown into the fire on an away game against a bitter rival could be intimidating — and could be asking for trouble. It's a risk the Eagles are not hesitant to take.

"We're practicing with the noise all the time out here," Reich said. "Obviously, this weekend, it isn't optimal. He's going up against a pretty good pass-rusher who, when they are in nickel defense, will be on his side. Honestly, when you're a player, you kind of get excited about that: 'Hey, if I'm going to go, I might as well go on the road and start off the right way.' That's what a warrior's mindset is."

2 Schedule scorn

After Sunday's game against 3-2 Washington, things get no easier for the Eagles schedule wise, facing seven teams in a row with a combined 24-7 record.

After their trip to D.C., Philly returns home to host the undefeated Vikings, followed by road games against NFC East foes the Cowboys and Giants. After that, super bowl contenders Atlanta, Seattle and Green Bay beckon. The Eagles have the hardest remaining schedule in the entire NFL.

"Everyone knows the importance of the division games and this is the first one," Reich said. "You want to kind of set the tone and tempo for how you're going to treat these games. But at the end of the day, you still get back to one at a time. You can only play one per week."

3 A tale of two D's

In the first half of the Eagles 24-23 setback in Detroit, the defense looked alarmingly similar to the dreadful Chip Kelly attack from last year. The team couldn't tackle, couldn't get off the field and was flagged for unnecessary penalties left and right.

But then in the second half they tightened up. They didn't allow a touchdown and gave the offense several chances to hang on and win the game.

"We were able to, sort of, you know," Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz said. "I don't want to say stop the bleeding, but we were able to get it controlled, and they were able to go out and play. One bad play didn't turn into the next. There's no dodging the fact we played a poor half of football in the first half."

Which defense will show up in Washington this week? One break for the Eagles is that Washington tight end Jordan Reed will likely miss Week 6 with a concussion.

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317 - Daniel P Wallace Jr (Household),
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Is Jackson eyeing a return to Philly?

The former Eagles star still seems to hold a grudge against his former coach, Chip Kelly.

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DeSean Jackson had his best years, statistically, as an Eagle. GETTY IMAGES

Chip Kelly is gone. The coast is clear.

At least that's the thinking of former Eagles wide receiver DeSean Jackson — who prepares for his former team to travel to Washington for a Week 6 battle.

"I never really had hard feelings toward Philadelphia, besides being released by whoever released me," Jackson told the media this week. "That's different — but I guess he's not there anymore."

The wideout left under ugly circumstances, amid accusations of racism, gang affiliation and against the wishes of many Eagles fans. Jackson had his best years in Philadelphia, and though he will be 30 years old when he becomes a free agent next offseason, he'd be a valuable addition to a young and so far mediocre receiving core.

Would he return?

"Being a contract year — next year I'll be a free agent — you never know how things will turn out, but whoever calls, I definitely think I'll be blessed to be wherever it is," Jackson said. "Hopefully it will still be here in Washington and not have to really worry about that, but you never know how this industry, how this business turns out, so you keep your options open, playing it smart, doing what you need to do to keep a job in the NFL."

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NFL best bets for Week 6: Pro football lines, spreads, gambling picks

Pay close attention to the point spreads this week.

ROBERT CRISCOLA
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Metro gives you three underdogs to consider in Week 6.

Atlanta at Seattle (-6)

An unstoppable force meets an immovable object as Atlanta's top-ranked passing attack invades CenturyLink Field to test Seattle's league-best defense. The Falcons have already proven themselves to be the real deal after winning outright as six-point underdogs in Denver last week against another highly-touted defense. Though the Seahawks are rested off a bye week, Matt Ryan and Julio Jones will give Seattle's secondary all they can handle.

Seattle could have a hard time putting up points. It is only 21st in PPG at 19.8. And while the Falcons' stoppers have allowed a ghastly 28 PPG this season, they've had to face some high-powered offenses like New Orleans and Oakland early in the year, which has skewed the numbers a bit. The Falcons only allowed 16 points to the Broncos last week, which was a very encouraging effort. In a game that feels like a toss-up, getting six points with Atlanta is a bargain.

The pick: Falcons +6

Philadelphia (-2.5) at Washington

The Redskins seek their fourth straight win on the season and their fifth straight ATS (against the spread) win against the Eagles when they host their NFC East rivals on Sunday. With their loss to the Lions last week, the Eagles dropped to 2-5 ATS in their last seven games as a road favorite. Philly's defense was exposed out of the bye week in Detroit (24 points allowed), and though the Eagles are fifth-best in football at getting to the QB (14 sacks), Kirk Cousins should be kept upright behind an O-line that's only surrendered eight sacks in five games.

The pick: Redskins +2.5

Dallas at Green Bay (-4)

Expect the Cowboys to light up the scoreboard at Lambeau Field. The Packers haven't trended favorably at home and will face the NFL's second-best offense by YPG. The Packers are ranked first in YPG allowed on the ground but have yet to face a rushing attack rated higher than 23rd this season, so Ezekiel Elliott should have no problem making his presence felt. Dallas will likely be without Dez Bryant again, but Dak Prescott has had no trouble finding underneath options like Cole Beasley and Terrance Williams all season long. They'll be matched up against a Packers defense that's allowed the eighth-highest yards-after-catch per game.

Meanwhile, Eddie Lacy has had a good bounce-back year for Green Bay but injured his ankle last week and is considered 'questionable' for this game. As it stands, he'll probably be less than 100 percent facing Dallas' 11th-ranked run stoppers.

Aaron Rodgers' numbers are way down this year (Green Bay is ranked a woeful 27th in passing YPG), so the Packers could have a difficult time moving the chains in this one.

The Packers look overmatched, yet they are favored in this tilt. That makes Dallas the best bet of the week.

The pick: Cowboys +4

Washington is getting points at home, and is a smart Week 6 pick. GETTY IMAGES

Best of the rest

- Cincinnati Bengals @ New England Patriots (-9
- Pittsburgh Steelers (-7.5) @ Miami Dolphins
- Cleveland Browns @ Tennessee Titans (-7)
- Los Angeles Rams @ Detroit Lions (-3.5)
- Jacksonville Jaguars @ Chicago Bears (-2.5)
- San Francisco 49ers @ Buffalo Bills (-7.5)
- Carolina Panthers (-3) @ New Orleans Saints
- Baltimore Ravens @ New York Giants (-3)
- Kansas City Chiefs @ Oakland Raiders (E)
- Indianapolis Colts @ Houston Texans (-3)
- New York Jets @ Arizona Cardinals (-7.5)

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METRO GOLF

Downingtown Country Club is historic, challenging and up-and-coming course

When you stand at the first tee at Downingtown Country Club, playing alongside some of the semi-private course's long-tenured members, you can't help but imagine what the facility once looked like.

Back in the first half of the 20th century, the Downingtown golf course (located around 40 minutes west of Center City) was a resort that hosted celebrities of the time, like Mickey Rooney and Robert Goulet.

Members are proud to remember the cache and elite caliber of the club back in the days of Ben Hogan and Sam Snead.

After a few down years recently, the club is making a comeback — under the umbrella of Ron Jaworski's growing golf empire.

Downingtown has an old-world feel, and has attributes of a classic course. BOB MACY

Joe Dillon, acting general manager, said Jaworski's group came in last year and immediately began to overhaul the 6,619 yard, par-72 golf course.

"We put down vitamins and packed it with everything the soil needed, the soil was just bland," Dillon said. "We aerified, which hadn't been done in 10 years, and we took down over 100 trees. We also put down 100,000 pounds of sand into the bunkers."

The result is a fair but challenging track that is short enough for golfers of all ages and skill, but with enough trouble in the form of relentless bunkers and small fairways to make par a good score on nearly every hole.

"Length off the tee isn't a must here, but definitely wedges and short game are important," Dante Troiani, the course's director of golf said.

The course has a nice mix of public golfers and over 120 members, making it classy but not too hoity-toity. Jaworski — who has also given the restaurant and banquet halls a makeover — is building Downingtown CC a club that can compete with nearly any in the area.

"He loves this golf course and he wants this golf course to be a leader in the market," Dillon said. EVAN MACY

Local knowledge tip: "Definitely need to keep it straight off the tee, it's tree lined and you don't want to miss long."
Price range: From $30 (twilight) to $89 (weekend morning)

And they're off

TGIF is a little sweeter Friday night as the Flyers drop the puck and start their season on the West Coast with a late-night, 10:30 p.m. start against the Kings on CSN. The Flyers have had slow starts in recent seasons, so a solid showing on their three-game road trip to start the year will be key to turning things around. GETTY IMAGES

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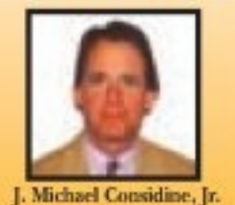

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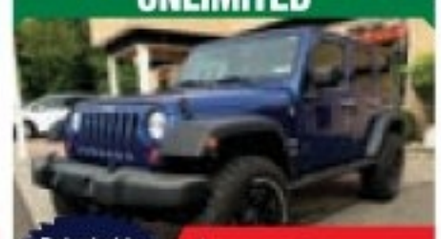
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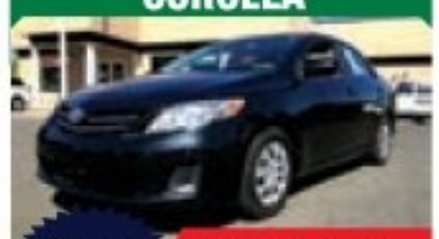
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39 Onassis nickname
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46 Satirical, maybe
47 Kind of bean
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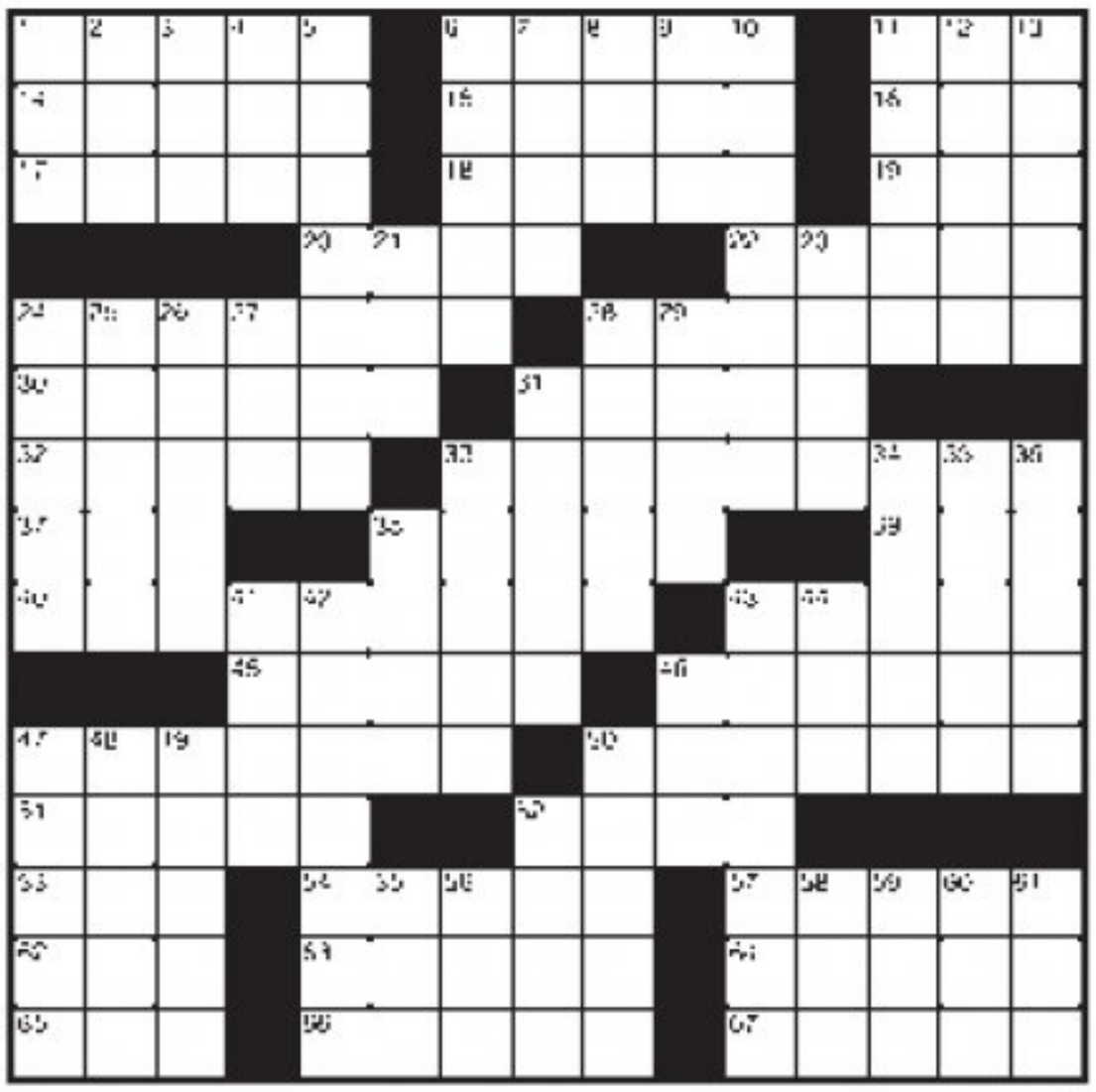
52 Large bay
53 Fizzy drink
54 Last box to check
57 Edgy
62 Future fish
63 Cool!
64 Hit Broadway musical
65 CSA monogram
66 Heroic tales
67 First showing

Down
1 Scientist's question
2 Color
3 Quaint lodging
4 Interest amt.
5 Caught a fly
6 Swains
7 Tattoo sites
8 Bro or sis
9 Pierre's here
10 Bravo opposite
11 Handy swabs (hyph.)
12 Close-mouthed
13 Pro votes
21 Rorem or Beatty
23 European capital
24 Ply steel wool
25 Identical
26 Restaurant employee
27 Stun
28 Conscious
29 Brooks and Gibson
31 Trap
33 City in New York
34 Gapes open
35 Bilko's name
36 Brake parts
38 Type of mate
41 Revise
42 Wrestling holds
43 Spliced, in botany
44 Dinny's rider
46 Wis. neighbor
47 Smoke or mist
48 In excess of
49 View from Everest
50 Common Market money
52 – – grip!
55 Kind of towel or party
56 Crone
58 Festive night
59 Robin's beak
60 R-V connection
61 Attend a banquet



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8		2	7		6		3	
	1			9		7		
7				8		4		
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9								1
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	9		4		8	3		5

hard

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7				5	9		2	
		9	5	7	3		4	
5	2				6	3		

metro.us/horoscopes

Aries By cleaning out the basement, attic or garage, you might discover some gems that you put aside in the past and forgot about. Be sure to open all those old boxes.

Taurus Social gatherings could pair you with someone whom you've been very eager to approach. Don't be hesitant to introduce the reason why you wanted to meet.

Gemini Certain financial or commercial matters can be successfully concluded to your satisfaction if you're willing to take the time and effort to do so.

Cancer Someone older or more experienced might point out a new direction for you. It could be some of the best advice you've received in a long time.

Leo You're in a favorable cycle for profiting from situations initiated by someone else. Be on the alert for anything different that sounds enticing.

Virgo Even if some of your present expectations seem to be a bit outlandish to some of your friends, they really aren't that far-fetched from your perspective.

Libra Something extremely constructive could develop through the efforts of another, which will give you the assistance you need to get ahead.

Scorpio You're likely to get an opportunity to cultivate a new friendship. It might even be with someone whom you've been anxious to get to know better.

Sagittarius A little extra effort where your career is concerned could put you out in front of the pack. Be assertive and conscientious when pursuing your objectives.

Capricorn If you allow a past educational experience to guide you, everything should work out quite beautifully in your dealings with others.

Aquarius An involvement where you share a mutual interest with another should work out quite smoothly today in some dealings you have with a person who is very difficult.

Pisces The timing could be unusually good for you to make a request of someone who doesn't readily grant favors.

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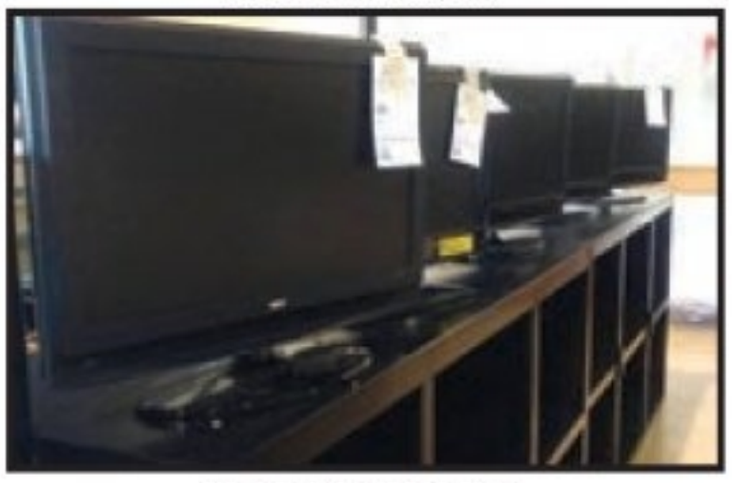

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